

The European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy



August 13, 2008

To the Memembers of the
Vereinigung kath. Spitalund KrankenseelsorgerInnen
der deutschsprachigen Schweiz

Dear Fellow Chaplains,

It was with great joy that I was informed about the conference of your chaplaincy that will take place in Switzerland with the theme "An Easterly word, and Easterly gesture". One cannot but be filled with joy when hearing of the Resurrection. For our work as spiritual care givers is directly associated with a life in the Resurrection of our Lord.

Being that we are so surrounded with suffering and pain, we can easily lose sight of the Resurrection. The question which we must ask ourselves is not so much how we can convey the message of Resurrection to those we care for as much as how we cultivate the Resurrection of our Lord in our inner being. If we have not done this, then we will never be able to convey salvation to others.

The Resurrection is associated with the Cross. So it is, when we are faced with the suffering of others, with the cross they bear, we must never lose sight of our own sufferings, of our own cross. This is why St. Isaac the Syrian states: "blessedness upon blessedness is reserved for the man who experiences profound co-suffering with one who leads a toilsome, unprosperous life, who is scorned, despised, and repudiated, whose heart is crushed in the presence of his comrades, and who is put to shame by others and by himself as well." Blessed is the man who is longsuffering and cultivates God's Grace within this world that crucified our Lord and hopes in light of the Resurrection.

Our personal struggle is never an individual struggle, just as our pastoral ministry can never be an individual act. The pastor is a vessel and conveyor of Grace. He can never practice his service independently from his self (*ex sese*), but always with the consent of the Church (*ex consensus Ecclesiae*) by which he overcomes his selfhood, becoming a related being by way of communion.

The communion that you will have during your time together will, I am sure, enrich each and every one of you. While you are together, please remember that the joy of your blessed gathering will overflow into all of the Chaplaincies of Europe in such a way that we will all be united in a universal way.

Conveying the best wishes of all the participants of the European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy, I remain

With great love and admiration for you all,

Rev. Dr. Stavros Kofinas

**Coordinator of the European Network of Healthcare Chaplaincy
(Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate)**

Email: coordinator@eurochaplains.org or kofinas@otenet.gr

Address:

Lycias 3
171 24 Nea Smyrni,
Greece

Phone: +30-6944 57 3625

Fax: +30 – 210 93 74 217

Website: www.eurochaplains.org